

'Politics of Friendship' in the Context of Wider Europe: Implications for European Space-making

Roald Plug
Institute of Geography
University of Edinburgh, Scotland

Abstract: This paper is engaged with the form of international relations the EU deploys with regard to its neighbouring states at the Eastern and Southern borders. The EU is excluding the so-called 'Ring of Friends' from active political participation in its Self-structure and is in this process of exclusion making migrants part of the process of *othering*. It puts forward the argument that precisely by the act of naming the Neighbours 'Friends', EU-discourse is undeliberately creating a discursive space within its transboundary governance-structure that could lead to a re-negotiation of the politics of inclusion and exclusion itself. Once a politics based on the virtues of Friendship and Fraternity can be thought of as a mature element within the political realm, this will open up new possibilities for re-thinking inclusiveness and hybridisation of cultural identities in a 'wider' European space.

Introduction

The 'Wider Europe Communication' introduced the concept of 'New Neighbourhood', meant to express the EU's desire to establish friendly, stable relations with its immediate eastern and southern neighbouring states, candidate and Balkan countries excluded (CEC, COM 2003/104). In order to enhance political stability, economic development and the reduction of poverty and social inequality within this so-called 'Ring of Friends', as the document explicitly names these neighbouring states, the EU is aiming at promoting regional co-operation and integration. Towards this end, the entire range of relevant EU-policy instruments will be employed. This communication states that the Wider Europe initiative should be seen independently from the issue of EU-membership.

This paper addresses the EU narrative of a Ring of Friends surrounding the newly enlarged Union, the particular form of international relations it constructs in this regional integration process and the implications for inclusion and tolerance/appreciation of hybridisation of cultural identities. First, a spatial-theoretical background of the EU construction of a 'Wider Europe' will be provided. Then I will move on to the particular EU discourse of a Politics of Friendship with regard to the 'Ring of Friends'. The intellectual lineages of the idea of a politics based on virtue of Friendship will be traced and then applied to the contemporary socio-spatial integration processes in and beyond Europe. I will conclude with displaying the implications for our thinking about inclusiveness of political communities and wider processes of space-making.

The Politics of Friendship with regard to the Ring of Friends

Processes of be/longing, inclusion/exclusion and ultimately the concepts of state, nation, borders, sovereignty are being (re-) negotiated within the Wider Europe region. Blurring and shifting borders are part of EU, yet the external EU borders become more impermeable, as exemplified by the practices of the EU external border agency FRONTEX. Schengen-like bordering practices between the 'Ring of Friends' and its southern and eastern neighbouring states (for example the Sub-Saharan states) are also at stake. The processes of 1) increased cross state-border migration, 2) strong transnational linkages of diaspora's with countries of origin, 3) sovereignty withering away from the state (and being increasingly shared between national governments, EU supra-state institutions and regions) and 4) the construction of transboundary governance structures; this all adds to what I call here the (socio-) spatial complexity of the Wider Europe region.

It can be argued that it is the combination of processes of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation that is constitutive of space (cf. Urry 2003). De-territorialisation in the European context - in theory - opens up possibilities to break away from the rigid state-nation-territory overlay-ideal, which over the last centuries produced numerous nationalistic and ethno-territorial conflicts and warfare, as well as highly uneven socio-economic geographies. At the same time, however, de-territorialisation in the Wider Europe region evokes, brings forth new forms of institutionalisation, re-territorialisation and consequently, of

new bordering and community-making practices. How does the EU deal with this dialectic in its transboundary governance structure with the 'Ring of Friends'?

Transboundary governance and the 'Ring of Friends'

The objective of ENP is to share the benefits of enlargement with neighbouring countries in strengthening stability, security and well-being for all. It offers these states the opportunity to engage in various EU activities, through greater cooperation on political, security and economic issues in particular, as well as culture and education. By drawing countries into an increasingly close relationship with the EU, it can create a 'Ring of Friends' so as to prevent the emergence of new dividing lines. Through this deeper engagement with its partners, the EU seeks to promote partners' commitment to 'common' values 1) the rule of law, 2) good governance, 3) respect for human rights, and 4) the promotion of good neighbourly relations' (CEC, COM 2004/795). This framework shows a striking analogy with the official Copenhagen-criteria that are employed in the enlargement-process by the EU. It could be argued that a form of *implicit conditionality* is used here by the EU in this process of regional integration.

The 'Wider Europe' doctrine and the concomitant European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) are being discursively tied together by the imagery of a 'Ring of Friends' beyond - yet bordering - the contemporary European Union territory. The Neighbour is perceived as a Friend and a Friend as a neighbour with whom the relations need to be strengthened through

Neighbourhood Programs in which issues of political, economical, social and cultural nature are dealt with. Beyond the ‘Ring of Friends’ – the EU apparently suggests - there is just (the evil of) chaos, Barbary and possibly; Foes. The European Union functions as a system that is imagining for itself a prior transcendental Ideal form (cf. Deleuze & Gattari 1983). All other forms then, speak to this form. EU (implicit) conditionality seems to have been designed to transform other forms into the Ideal Self - while at the same time excluding these form(s) from political influence into its own political decision-making structure.

The timing of its commencement suggests that the European Neighbourhood Policy is to a large extent meant to exclude the now-surrounding states of the European Union from political and active participation in its supranational institutions and is thereby taking away any remaining hopes within these states that the EU is seriously considering taking them up into their Self-structure. I argue that the European Neighbourhood Policy – Strategy Document should be seen in this light. It was published on May 15th 2004 – exactly 2 weeks after the enlargement round that incorporated 10 states from the eastern and southern borders.

In a sense, their position vis á vis the European Union becomes very similar to the countries in the European Economic Area. The main difference is that processes of cross-border *othering* at stake with regard to Maghreb and Mashreq countries contrary to for example Iceland, Norway and Switzerland. The external borders are increasingly showing signs of fortifications, with a European External Border Agency named FRONTEX working in close cooperation with transnational policing agencies and local governments.

The Wider Europe-Neighbourhood-Ring of Friends doctrine

EU discourse speaks of a Wider Europe, but sovereignty is only shared internally between the Member-States and is not shared externally, with the surrounding states that make up the notion of a Wider Europe. The Neighbouring states however, will deal with the allocation of citizenship rights either directly in the Neighbourhood Programs with the EU (as part of the European Neighbourhood Policy) or on a more informal/closed setting, and their diasporas in the EU will increasingly influence the political agendas of both the various member-states as well as of the supranational level. Thereby, they exert increasing influence on the politics (of inclusion/exclusion) by the EU. The EU member states are willing to share sovereignty, but not (yet) with the ‘Ring of Friends’.

The Wider Europe idea is discursively connected with EU conditionality and a Europeanisation process that imposes its governance, in particular with regard to legal frameworks, economic (trade) neo-liberalisation and morality to an inferiorised, subjugated ‘Other’. A distinctive discourse arises from these notions: the *Wider Europe-Neighbourhood-Ring of Friends* doctrine informs the making of a European space beyond the external borders, which is inherently exclusive in nature and tends to re-produce the uneven geographies of the colonial era.

Politics of Friendship – intellectual lineages

Juxtaposed to the EU narrative of a politics based on Friendship, there are distinctive intellectual lineages of utopian visions about politics based on such virtues as 'friendship'. The idea of a politics based on Friendship seems persistent and has been employed in different contexts; particularly relevant in Wider Europe context are the ideas of utopian socialists in late 19th century, that were influenced by friendships at the personal level, within the British Empire (Gandhi 2006). In everyday-life, the virtue of friendship was leading to a questioning of the dominating and subjugating workings of the Empire from within. These personal friendships between individuals who embodied the characteristics of the 'two poles' of the Empire were undermining rigid notions of Self and Other that were distinctive and an even necessary requirement, a *sine qua non*, for those within imperial power in order to colonise territories, bodies and minds (cf. Said 1978).

These considerations were rooted in the individual experiences in every-day settings and interactions within imperial context – where processes of *othering* and uneven geographies as well as economic development were part of its nature. These socialist utopians who strived for establishing a politics more sensitive to culture, based on virtues such as friendship and incorporating particular visions of space and place-making leading to affective communities, was however, kept out of the political realm, by conservative forces - but most strikingly and perhaps ironically, also by socialist and communist leading figures with transnational influence who developed

their political visions along the lines of strict realist considerations. For example, Lenin was convinced these deemed-utopian visions would be harmful for the socialist international project, as in the political arena their ideas would be ridiculed by the political Right and those in (state-)power (cf. Gandhi 2006).

Derrida argued that the history of humanity is a narrative of humanisation reflected into fraternization (Derrida 1994). Fraternal Friendship, in EU context, indicates that an 'Other' that resembles the 'Self' is discursively invented - on a 'Wider' European level. Elements of fratricide, however, are just as much at stake here as humanisation practices; the EU falls short of the virtue of Fraternity in the European Neighbourhood Programs. As I have argued, the Other's/the Friend's decision in the EU Self-structure is merely implicit, indirect and not institutionalised (cf. Critchley 1998). The virtues of Friendship and Fraternity are not negotiated or re-worked in EU discourse and the making of European space and place; neither are these part of transboundary governance structures.

The connection with the French Revolution adagio is interesting: Notions of Libert  and Egalit  are negotiated in the political realm in the EU, but what happened to Fraternit ? The European Union is re-defining the concept of international 'friendly' relations, both internally as well as externally. I argue here that it is this dialectic between (the fundamentally and inevitably spatial) processes of fraternal humanisation and fratricide that is underlying the contemporary EU enlargement- and inclusion/exclusion processes in the 'Wider Europe' region.

At the same time, the call for more eye for ethnic and cultural hybridity, multiple and

overlapping identities, spatial complexity and transnationalism (cf. Painter 2002; Benhabib 1996; Kymlicka & Norman 1999; Modood 1999; Bhabha 1994) seems to be in an impasse; it has lost some of its force, in the wake of re-territorialisation and bordering processes – as well as the return to assimilation discourses within most European nation-states (cf. Brubaker 2001).

How can a utopian Politics of Friendship enter the political realm? External border-policies and post nation-state governmentalities

The idea of Friendship in EU context is held hostage by the neo-liberal internal-market expansion agenda. But by the act of naming the Neighbours ‘Friends’ the discourse is undeliberately opening up for negotiation at its (literal and metaphorical) edges. How can we think of possibilities of a politics of Friendship to enter the political realm and to become relevant within EU discourse? I argue that this can be conceived of in a particular connection with certain governance-characteristics of dominant (multi-level) political structures and neo-liberal narratives. My argumentation consists of two arguments with regard to the nature of the EU discourse that in their particular combination allow for a utopian (socialist vision) of a politics based on friendship to enter the political realm.

By typical neo-liberal, or neo-classicist, fashion it can be argued that borders and migration/visa policies bring such huge transaction-costs that it makes more

sense to eradicate, or at least diminish the fortifying efforts currently at stake at the external borders. The costs of fortifying, managing borders and the immigration-visa sector, and the battle against undocumented workers are enormous, plus these efforts are disrupting with regard to tendencies towards economic equilibrium. It is a straight-forward paradox that similar economic rationalities are not employed with regard to the external borders likewise the internal borders - of the Schengen-area (cf. van Houtum 2002). Yet, neo-liberalism, with its emphasis on geo-economics rather than geopolitics initially seemed to allow for thinking about a borderless world, also with regard to mobility of individuals (cf. Sparke & Lawson 2003; Ohmae 1990, 1995).

It is here that the unstability of the EU discourse is most prevalent and poignant; allowing for a fundamental re-negotiation of European space in terms of inclusiveness, social cohesion and possibilities for multiple forms of identity-construction and belonging - without compromising dominant governance-structures and the neo-liberal discourse (as exemplified by the internal-market- and Lisbon-strategies). The argument that I am putting forward is that neo-liberalism offers so far unexplored benefits juxtaposed to the infamous ‘hollowing-out’ the state (Jessop 2004), but that in this European neo-liberal context, largely by coincidence and unconsciously within that same context mobility of persons, inclusiveness and tolerance towards multiple and overlapping identities can finally be negotiated in *a broadened political realm*. In this context, the population-governmentality in European context is also undergoing qualitative transformations.

Post nation-state governmentality and population-politics

According to Foucault from the sixteenth century not just sovereignty was important, but even more so the objectives that could be achieved on the basis of this sovereignty – of the state. The governing of the state was thought to leading to the 'right disposition of things'. The most important instrument in order to achieve this 'right disposition of things' was 'statistics', which originally meant 'science of the state'. Describing and mapping a population by the state led to the elimination of the family as the basis for governing the state; it appeared that many developments could not be retrieved to the household or the family. In fact, this meant the 'discovery' of the 'population' as an essential part of the state, and from then on was subject to be moulded by the state. This population knows its own problematic, in the form of births and deaths; diseases, famines and epidemics; from the eighteenth century it all fell within the domain of the state. Population became above anything else the ultimate goal of the state (Foucault 1991).

Governmentality defines the nature of population-politics of the polity; mapping, describing the population leading to 'the right disposition of things' (Foucault 1991). This development, within the framework of the state - this nexus between population-orientation, the incorporation of the *oikos* into the state and the mentality of a 'right disposition of things' is what I understand and use as the concept of governmentality. It is this governmentality that informs policy-making in (supra-)state-context (cf. Painter 2002).

A population-oriented governmentality that found its origins in the state but is

withering away from that exact same state and becomes embedded in these supra-state institutions is at stake here. In particular with regard to 'moulding' the population (in terms of race, ethnicity, cultural background and identity) an important shift might be taking place. The European Commission acknowledges in its Communications the diversity of EU-space in terms of cultural, ethnic, religious background. Also; in the proposed EU Constitution of 2005 there is no particular reference to Christianity or any other more essentialist vision about the relationship between territory and *demoi*; it could be aimed at constructing an open and inclusive space. At the supranational level, a strict integration between a *demoi* and a state, or at least a sovereignty with clear and straight-forward borders demarcating a community is not striven for. I argue that in principle, this opens up possibilities for a more open community. The Supra-state/national level tends towards a different population-governmentality, a qualitatively different framing of a population/territory/sovereignty/identity overlay-ideal – as juxtaposed to the nation-state governmentality. Post-state governmentality holds the promise – without wanting to include too much EUphoria here – that another population-geography and – politics is indeed possible. In the EU-supranational identity, the diversity and hybridity of cultural, ethnic and religious space could be acknowledged.

Growing diaphora's and transnational networks help questioning rigid lines of division and erode the border, migrant populations exert political influence within EU-states, with regard to the EU parliament and are re-negotiating the distinguishable transcendental identities between EU and surrounding societies. A post nation-state

population governmentality and effort to open the external borders, also in terms of their *permeability* (Langer 1999), allow for taking the suppressed notions of politics of friendship striving for overlays and hybridisation in cultural identities and uneven geographies into the political realm.

I do not argue for particular changes within the international state-system, nor do I not question the endurance of the nation-state within a supra-national framework. Yet, in the cultural cum political realm, new notions of ‘fraternity’ and ‘friendship’ can be made relevant, leading to a politics that is aimed at constructing affective communities with concomitant processes of inclusiveness and less uneven geographies.

Paradoxically and perhaps ironically, contemporary political discursive European landscape with its construction of a *Wider Europe-Neighbourhood-Ring of Friends* doctrine hereby opens up at the edges for incorporating a utopian (international-socialist) form of a politics of friendship by - instead of deploying more insurgent forms of agenda-setting - initially and primarily seeking alliances with prevailing discourses. If this incorporation of the politics of friendship envisioned by utopian-socialists into the political realm is possible, how does this influence our thinking about space and place-making and socio-spatial integration processes?

Implications for thinking about European space-making and languages of integration and difference

A utopian Politics of Friendship informs new thinking about space and place – it condenses, becomes real geographies even in the context of neo-liberal policies and despite tendencies towards geo-economics and securitisation discourses. Most importantly it allows for thinking about space-making in the context of transboundary governance between two polities beyond the Self-Other binary that was prevalent in constructions of Empires and on a smaller scale, regional integration processes (cf. Paasi 1996; Said 1978). *Languages of integration* and *-difference* can unfold in new ways, where virtues of friendship and fraternity - formerly kept out of the political agenda-setting process - seek alliance with current imperatives of space-making.

The line of reasoning of Said that it was always the cultural element, the construction of an inferiorised cultural ‘Other’, that opened up possibilities for - and was constitutive of – colonialism, instead of material ‘rationalities’ or ‘necessities’ coming forth out of the capitalist state-system (cf. Taylor & Flint 1999), has been followed by many authors in postcolonial theory (cf. Chrisman 2003; Jacobs 1996; Williams & Chrisman & al. 1993). It is the Self-Other dichotomy and the construction of a *constitutive outside* that haunts socio-spatial integration processes. The process establishing Self and Other categories, distinctive of the *language of difference* within the dialectic process between this *language of difference* and *language of integration* of region-making (Paasi 1996), could unfold in a

different manner than we have seen before. The socially constructed 'Other' in the process of EU enlargement and defining its own identity is first and foremost the excluded Neighbour. However, the utopian version of a politics based on the virtue of friendship entering European discourse – for the reasons I have stated above - allows for imagining an integration process that is not informed by a social construction of a Self-Other binary.

To conclude; I propose that we study socio-spatial integration processes from a more idealist prismatic view, thinking about how affective communities can be established along these lines and call for reinforcing the academic-cum-political project aimed at the flourishing of multiple, overlapping and hybrid identities with renewed vigour.

References

- Benhabib, S. (1996). *Democracy and Difference: Contesting the Boundaries of the Political*. Princeton University Press, Princeton.
- Bhabha, H.K. (1994). *The Location of Culture*. Routledge, London and New York.
- Brubaker, R. (2001). The return to assimilation? Changing perspectives on immigration and its sequels in France, Germany and the United States. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, vol. 24 (4), 531-548.
- Chrisman, L. (2003). *Postcolonial Contraventions: Cultural Readings of Race, Imperialism and Transnationalism*. Manchester University Press, Manchester.
- Commission of the European Community (2004). *The European Neighbourhood Policy*. Strategy paper, 373/4, final.
- Commission of the European Community (2003). *Wider Europe-Neighbourhood: A new framework for relations with our Eastern and Southern Neighbours*. Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament. Brussels, 11 March 2003.
- Critchley, S. (1998). The Other's decision in Me (What are the Politics of Friendship?). *European Journal of Social Theory*, vol. 1 (2), 259-279.
- Deleuze, G. & F. Guattari (1983). *Anti-Oedipus; Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. University of Minnesota Press, Minnesota.
- Derrida, J. (1994). *Politics of Friendship*. Verso, London.
- Derrida, J. (2001). *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*. Routledge, New York.
- Foucault, M. (1991). Governmentality. In Graham, B., C. Gordon & P. Miller (edit.): *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*. Harvester Wheatsheaf, London.
- Gandhi, L. (2006). *Affective Communities: Anticolonial Thought, Fin-De-Siècle Radicalism, and the Politics Of Friendship*. Duke University Press, Durham.
- Jacobs, J. (1996). *Edge of Empire. Postcolonialism and the City*. Routledge, London.
- Jessop, B. (2004). *Hollowing Out the 'Nation-State' and Multilevel Governance*. In Kennett, P (edit.): *A Handbook of Comparative Social Policy*, 11-25. Edward Elgar, Cheltenham.
- Kymlicka, W. and W. Norman (1999). *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*. Oxford, University Press.
- Langer, J. (1999). *Towards a Conceptualisation of Border: the Central-European Experience*. In Eskelinen, H., J. Liikanen J& J. Oksa (edit.): *Curtains of Iron and Gold: Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Interaction*. Ashgate, Aldershot.
- Modood, T. (1999). Anti-Essentialism, Multiculturalism and the Recognition of Religious Groups. In Kymlicka, W. and W. Norman (edit): *Citizenship in Diverse Societies*, 175-195. University Press, Oxford.
- Ohmae, K. (1995). *The End of the Nation State*. Free Press, New York.
- Ohmae, K. (1990). *The Borderless World*. Harper Business, New York.
- Paasi, A. (2001). Europe as a social process and a discourse: Considerations of place, boundaries and identity. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, vol. 8 (1), 7-28.
- Paasi, A. (1996). *Territories, Boundarie, and Consciousness: The Changing Geographies of the Finnish–Russian Border*. John Wiley & Sons, New York.
- Painter, J. (2002). Governmentality and regional economic strategies. In Hillier, J. & E. Rooksby (edit): *Habitus: A Sense of Place*. Ashgate, Aldershot.
- Said, E. (1978). *Orientalism*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

- Sparke, M & V. Lawson (2003). Entrepreneurial geographies of global-local governance. *In* Agnew, J., K. Mitchell & G. Ó Tuathail (edit.): *A Companion to Political Geography*, 315-334. Blackwell, Oxford.
- Taylor, P. & C. Flint (1999). *Political Geography; World, Economy, Nation, State and Locality*. Prentice Hall, New York.
- Urry, J. (2003). *Global Complexity*. Blackwell, Cambridge.
- van Houtum, H. (2002). Borders of comfort: Ambivalences in EU border policies. Spatial economic bordering processes in and by the European Union. *Regional and Federal Studies*, vol. 12(4), 37-58.
- Williams, P. & L. Chrisman (1993). *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory. A Reader*. Harvester Wheatsheaf, London